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Teaching Gender in Early Childhood Education: A Non-Binary Approach

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HNRS 4900

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Abstract

The focus of this document is to provide professionals in the field of education an overview of gender development in early childhood education and how to teach students about gender in early childhood settings. The current research on gender development supports the notion that gender is socially constructed from birth, but not directly linked to biological sex. Next, a list of high-quality children's literature is included; the literature addresses concepts surrounding gender development, identity, and expression in developmentally-appropriate ways. Lastly, several of the children's books are utilized in sample lesson plans and materials for educators to use as they teach gender in early childhood settings.

Keywords: gender, early childhood, education, transgender, gender expression, gender identity

Teaching Gender in Early Childhood Education: A Non-Binary Approach

Many factors can be found at the core of one's identity. Such factors may include sexual orientation, gender, spirituality, and many more. For some, certain biological factors such as sex become intertwined with their gender identity. Gender, however, is a factor that often blurs the line between biology and identity. Gender is a complex concept. Historically, educators, doctors, psychologists, etc., viewed gender identity in a binary framework (boy or girl). However, this conceptualization has recently shifted towards the more flexible view of a spectrum.

The conceptualization of gender as a spectrum, rather than a binary, can be an entirely new concept to some professionals in the field of education. One's gender identity, however, is not linked to biological sex (Yelland and Grieshaber, n.d./1998, p. 2). One important question for educators and scholars invested in exploring child development is, "How does this affect early childhood students?"

Much of the research regarding children's gender development has found that children understand whether they are a boy or a girl by the age of two (Chick, Heilman-Houser, & Hunter, 2002, Helman & Heikkila, 2014, Martin & Ruble, 2010). Children begin to form their own concepts of gender identity, understand the social roles of each gender identity, and discover their own gender identity early on in life. Therefore, it is our responsibility as early childhood educators to provide children opportunities to learn about and explore gender identities, including those that exist outside the gender binary, as early as preschool. This resource intends to do just that.

In this document, one will find a literature review summarizing recent research regarding children's development and gender identity. Then, a list of relevant children's literature resources can be found. These resources will guide educators in choosing developmentally appropriate materials and books that explore gender diversity and varying gender identities. Lastly, a select few of these resources are featured in sample lesson plans and teacher's guides; these sample lessons are intended to be used to supplement a gender-inclusive curriculum. The hope is that teachers find this to be a valuable resource in teaching students about the gender spectrum, their own gender identity, and inclusive values.

Literature review

The Gender Spectrum

Gender is not a binary. According to Oldehinkel (2017), sex and gender have two different definitions. Sex refers to biological factors, such as body structure and reproductive organs, and gender refers to "socioculturally delineated masculine and feminine roles" (Oldehinkel, 2017, p. 863). This is a relatively new conceptualization of the term "gender" as in the past it has been thought that gender and sex were not mutually exclusive terms but an aspect of one's biology determined at birth. Such a conceptualization leads to an understanding of gender and sex as a binary, meaning that there are only two genders, male and female, and that there is no variation of the two. However, conceptualizing gender as a binary fails to recognize those that exist outside of this binary, such as transgender and gender non-conforming individuals.

In order to recognize and validate individuals that exist outside of the gender binary, it is important to recognize that gender is a spectrum. In their example of a social structure that

allows for individuals to identify themselves along a gender spectrum rather than within a binary system, Smithers (2014) describes how the Cherokee Native Americans recognized people with “both a male and female spirit,” as two spirits (p. 633). The term “two spirit” supports a more modern definition of gender that places it along a spectrum. Two spirit individuals do not fall into strict “boy” and “girl” categories as suggested by a gender binary. Instead, with both a male and a female spirit, people who identify as two spirited fall somewhere in the middle of the gender spectrum. With this conceptualization, those who do not fit within the gender binary are recognized and validated. A social structure which allows for individuals to identify themselves along a gender spectrum is possible—and necessary—in American school systems as well.

Students in Ohio’s school systems need to feel included and supported in their own classrooms. The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)’s 2017 State Snapshot revealed that Ohio’s state schools are not safe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students (GSLEN, 2017). Of the students included in this report, 83% of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks about gender expression regularly, and 74% heard negative remarks about transgender people regularly (GSLEN, 2017). Also, it is reported that in 2017, 33% of students surveyed were prevented from using the bathroom that aligns with their gender, 30% were prevented from using the locker room that aligns with their gender, and 28% were prevented from using their chosen name and pronouns (GSLEN, 2017). Lastly, only 16% of students surveyed had access to an inclusive curriculum and 38% had access to inclusive library resources (GSLEN, 2017). By teaching gender as a spectrum and inclusive values, students will feel included and supported in the classrooms of Ohio.

Gender Identity Development

Gender is a social construct, which means that children begin forming their concept of gender based on their interaction with society from the moment they are born. One theory that supports this claim in research is Gender Schema Theory (GST). Gender Schema Theory (GST) argues that children create cognitive concepts, known as schema, to aid them in understanding gender, and it has been used in research to explain children's understanding of their own gender identity and their gendered preferences (Dinella, 2016). Chick, Heilman-Houser, and Hunter (2002) argue that the concept of gender is explored and discovered through play, and that preferences for gendered play, toys, and same-gender friends can occur at 2 years old (p.149). Thus, it can be concluded that children's gender schema become socially constructed through play at a young age. As their schema becomes clearer, they develop their own gender identity.

Research has also shown that gender is constructed from birth through talk, interaction, and active participation in discourse (Grieshaber, n.d./1998, p. 15, Danby, n.d./1998, p. 175, & Lowe, n.d./1998, p. 206-207). Much of this discourse occurs through play as it is developmentally appropriate for young children to learn through play. Therefore, early childhood educators need to provide children with opportunities to learn about individuals who identify outside of the gender binary through play so that they begin to construct gender schema about diverse gender identities. To do this, educators need to provide a curriculum that challenges the status quo by offering children literature, toys, materials, props, etc. that represent the diverse gender identities that exist within their social structure.

Children's Literature Review

It is important for young children to be exposed to a language-rich environment. High-quality preschool settings and early learning centers promote literacy development by providing and using high-quality children's literature. Grace Lin, critically acclaimed children's book

author, says that books are both mirrors and windows; a book can show you the world, but they can also show you a reflection of yourself (2016). It is important that children see representation of themselves and their own gender identities in the media they consume. It is also important that children see representation of other gender identities that they are not familiar with, such as transgender identities or non-binary identities, in order to learn about their outside world and how gender is constructed. The following is a collection of books that do just that—provide mirrors and windows to the world of children’s gender identity and exploration.

It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list of every children’s book that addresses children’s gender identity. Instead, this list is comprised of books available through Bowling Green State University’s Curriculum Resource Center at Jerome Library that address gender identity or expression as a topic. Some titles were also found through the Children’s Literature Comprehensive Database (CLCD). Each book is listed alphabetically by last name and each entry includes the title and author(s), publisher’s summary, and a suggestion for which grade level(s) the book would be appropriate. Grade level suggestions are based on developmentally-appropriate practice. For example, it is recommended that chapter books are used for older audiences, and books with vivid images and simple text are recommended for the youngest of audiences.

Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress by Christine Baldacchino, illustrated by Isabelle Malenfant

Publisher's summary: *Morris has a great imagination. He paints amazing pictures and he loves his classroom's dress-up center, especially the tangerine dress. It reminds him of tigers, the sun and his mother's hair.*

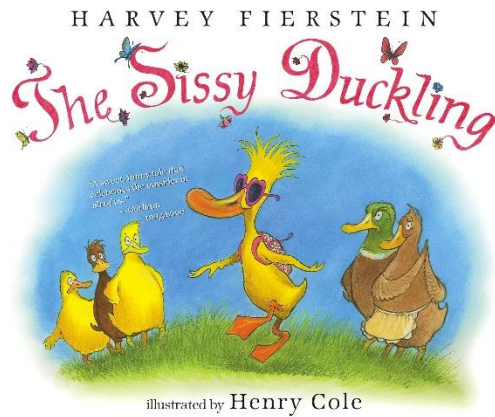


The other children don't understand—dresses, they say, are for girls. And Morris certainly isn't welcome in the spaceship his classmates are building—astronauts, they say, don't wear dresses.

One day Morris has a tummy ache, and his mother lets him stay home from school. He stays in bed reading about elephants, and he dreams about a space adventure with his cat, Moo. Inspired by his dream, Morris paints a fantastic picture, and everything begins to change when he takes it to school.

Christine Baldacchino's sweetly told story about the courage and creativity it takes to be different is complemented by Isabelle Malenfant's warm illustrations that perfectly capture Morris's vulnerability and the vibrancy of his imagination.

Grade level suggestion: Pre-K & Kindergarten



The Sissy Duckling, Harvey Fierstein, illustrated by Henry Cole.

Publisher's summary: *Elmer is not like the other boy ducklings. While they like to build forts, he loves to bake cakes. While they like to play baseball, he wants to put on the halftime show. Elmer is a great big*

sissy.

But when his father is wounded by a hunter's shot, Elmer proves that the biggest sissy can also be the greatest hero.

Grade level suggestion: 1st-3rd (for length).

George by Alex Gino

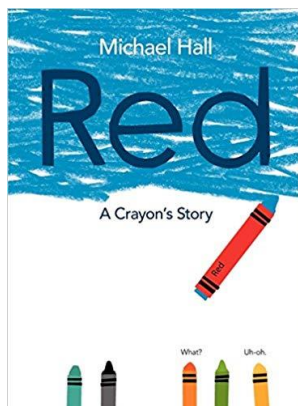
Publisher's summary: *When people look at George, they think they see a boy. But she knows she's not a boy. She knows she's a girl.*

George thinks she'll have to keep this a secret forever. Then her teacher announces that their class play is going to be Charlotte's Web. George really, really, REALLY wants to play Charlotte. But the teacher says she can't even try out for the part... because she's a boy.



With the help of her best friend, Kelly, George comes up with a plan. Not just so she can be Charlotte—but so everyone can know who she is, once and for all.

Grade level suggestion: 2nd-3rd (read aloud), 3rd-5th (independent reading or literature circles)



Red: A Crayon's Story, Michael Hall.

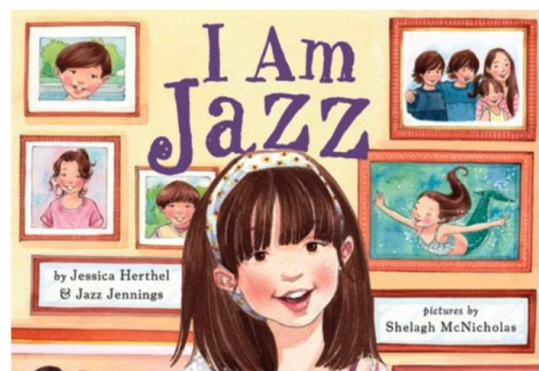
Publisher's summary: *Red's factory-applied label clearly says that he is red, but despite the best efforts of his teacher, fellow crayons and art supplies, and family members, he cannot seem to do anything right until a new friend offers a fresh perspective.*

Grade level suggestion: PreK-3rd grade

I Am Jazz, Jessica Herthel & Jazz Jennings,

illustrated by Shelagh McNicholas

Publisher's summary: *Jazz always knew she was different from other kids. She had a girl's brain and a boy's body. This is her story.*



From the time she was two years old, Jazz knew that she had a girl's brain in a boy's body. She loved pink and dressing up as a mermaid and didn't feel like herself in boys' clothing. This confused her family, until they took her to a doctor who said that Jazz was transgender and that she was born that way. Jazz's story is based on her real-life experience and she tells it in a simple, clear way that will be appreciated by picture book readers, their parents, and teachers.

Grade level suggestion: PreK – 3



A House for Everyone: a story to help children learn about gender identity and gender expression, Jo Hirst, illustrated by Naomi Bardoff

Publisher's summary: *At lunchtime, all of Tom's friends gather at school to work together building their house.*

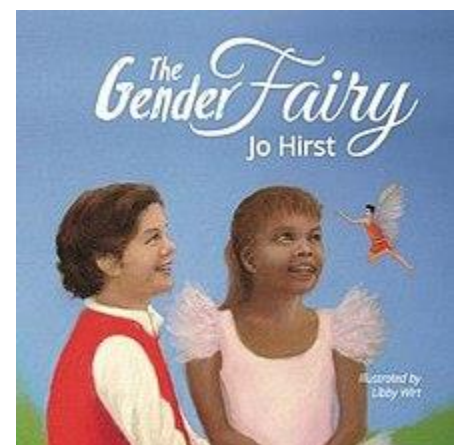
Each one of them has a special job to do, and each one of them has a different way of expressing their gender identity.

Jackson is a boy who likes to wear dresses. Ivy is a girl who likes her hair cut really short. Alex doesn't feel like 'just' a boy, or 'just' a girl. They are all the same, they are all different - but they are all friends.

Grade level suggestion: PreK-3rd

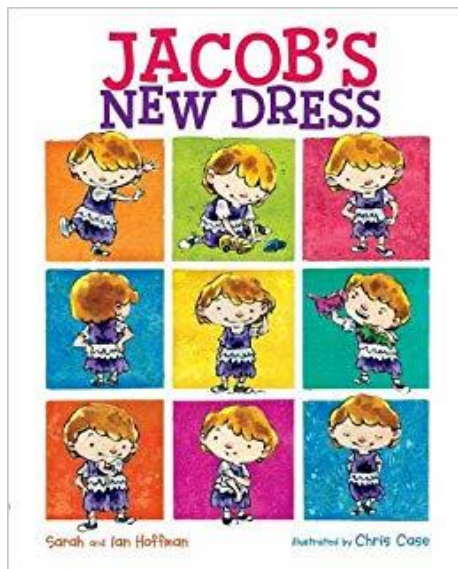
The Gender Fairy, Jo Hirst, illustrated by Libby Wirt

Publisher's summary: *The Gender Fairy is a simple story about two children feeling the relief of being heard: Of two children who are taking their first joyful steps toward living as their true selves. It is an educational resource for all children and adults to understand what it might feel like to be a transgender child.*



For children aged four and up, The Gender Fairy is designed to be read aloud in the classroom or at home. It includes notes for parents and teachers to aid discussion and learning, completed in collaboration with Roz Ward (La Trobe University).

Grade level suggestion: PreK and above



Jacob's New Dress, Sarah and Ian Hoffman, illustrated by Chris Case.

Publisher's summary: *Some kids say boys can't wear "girl" clothes—but why not? Jacob loves playing dress-up, when he can be anything he wants to be—a pirate, a bird, a fireman! But he also wants to just be himself and wear his favorite thing... a dress!*

Now Jacob has a new dress that he made himself and what he wants most of all is to wear it to school. Will mom and dad let him?

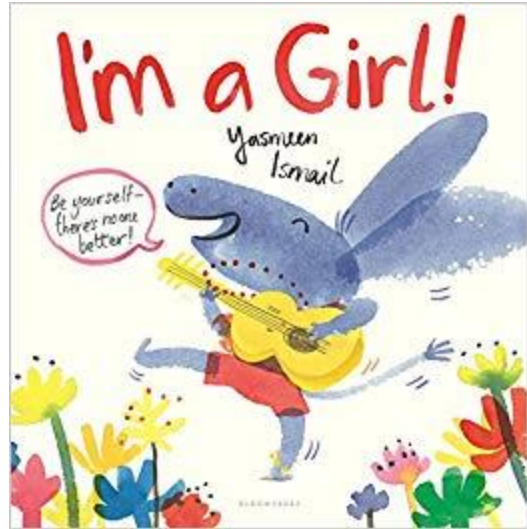
This heartwarming story speaks to the unique challenges faced by boys who don't identify with traditional gender roles.

Grade level suggestion: PreK-1st

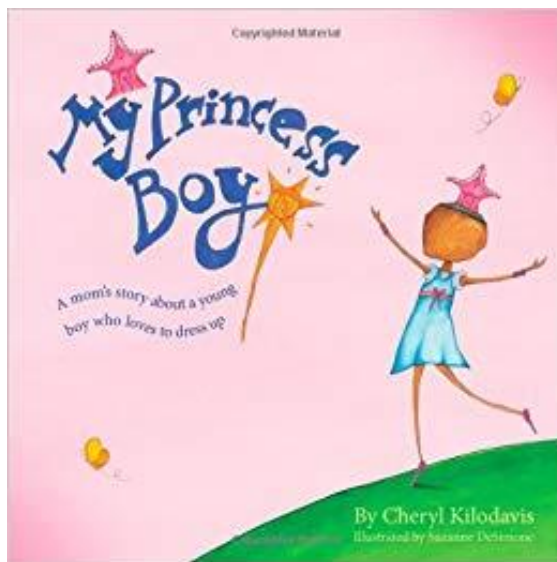
I'm A Girl!, Yasmeen Ismail

Publisher's summary: *Are girls really made of sugar, spice, and everything nice? Not this little girl! This girl is sweet and sour, and sometimes very loud. She's brave and strong, does everything her own way, and she's never, ever too shy to say, "I'm a girl!"*

This joyful and energetic story celebrates being true to yourself—there's no one better!



Grade level suggestion: Pre-K & Kindergarten



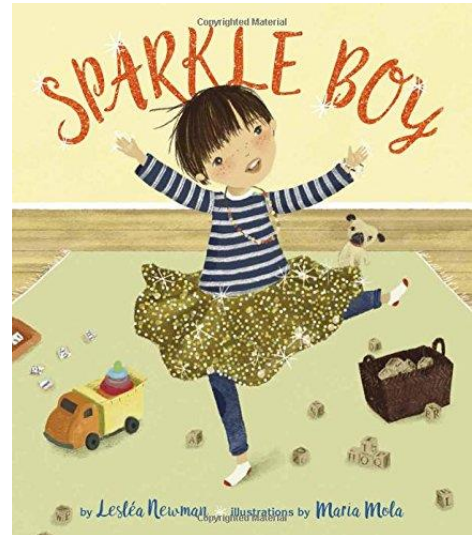
My Princess Boy: A Mom's Story About a Young Boy Who Loves to Dress Up, Cheryl Kilodavis, illustrated by Suzanne DeSimone.

Publisher's summary: *A four-year-old boy loves dressing up in princess clothing. "A nonfiction picture book about acceptance ... to give children and adults a tool to talk about unconditional friendship."*

Grade level suggestion: K-5

Sparkle Boy, Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Maria Mola.

Publisher's summary: *Casey loves to play with his blocks, puzzles, and dump truck, and he also loves things that shimmer, glitter, and sparkle. Casey's older sister, Jessie, thinks this is weird. Shimmery, glittery, sparkly things are only for girls. Right?*



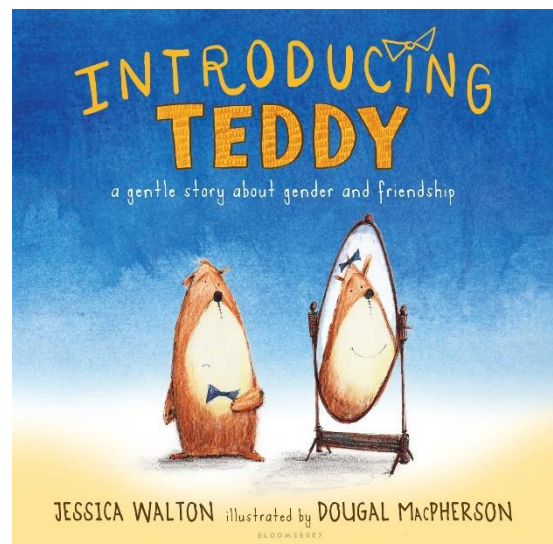
When Casey and Jessie head to the library for story time, Casey proudly wears his shimmery skirt and sparkly bracelet. His nails glitter in the light. Jessie insists that Casey looks silly. It's one thing to dress like this around the house, but going outside as a "sparkle boy" is another thing entirely. What will happen when the other kids see him?

This sweet and refreshing story speaks to us all about acceptance, respect, and the simple freedom to be yourself. Shimmery, glittery, sparkly things are fun—for everyone!

Grade level suggestion: 2nd-3rd

Introducing Teddy: A Gentle Story About Gender and Friendship, Jessica Walton, illustrated by Dougal MacPherson.

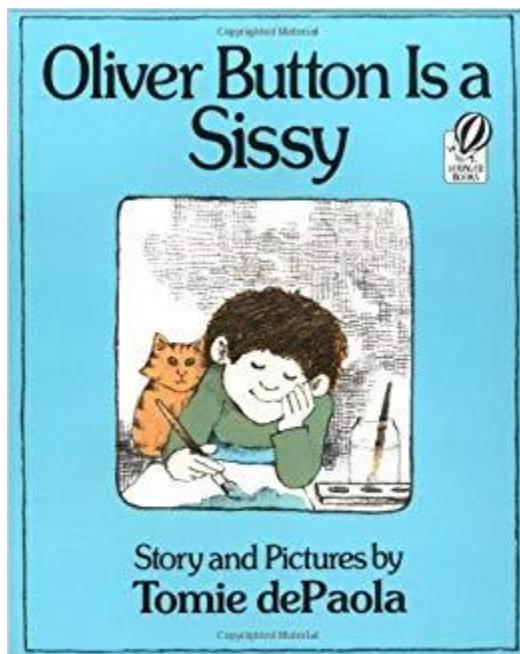
Publisher's summary: *Teddy knows in her heart that she is a girl, not a boy. Will her friends understand? And will they call her Tilly instead of Thomas?*



The thing about being a boy or a girl is that it doesn't matter what people say—it's what you say that counts. But it's better when your friends understand.

Starring a teddy bear who is defined by what's inside instead of what's outside, and with a heartwarming story about being true to yourself, Introducing Teddy is a sweet, accessible book to help the youngest readers understand gender identity and transition.

Grade level suggestion: PreK & Kindergarten



Oliver Button Is a Sissy, Tomie dePaola

Publisher's summary: *Oliver Button didn't like to do the things that boys usually do. He didn't play ball very well, but he really liked to draw pictures and read and, most of all, dance. The boys teased him, and the girls stuck up for him, and on the school wall somebody wrote Oliver Button is a sissy! But Oliver just practiced his dancing even harder. One day he'd*

show them all.

Tomie dePaola's surprise ending to this touching, humorous story about a very real little boy and his efforts to cope with parents and peers will warm the heart of every reader.

Grade level suggestion: 1st-3rd grade

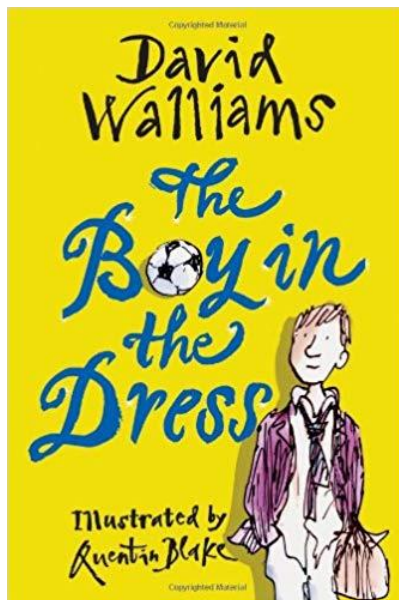
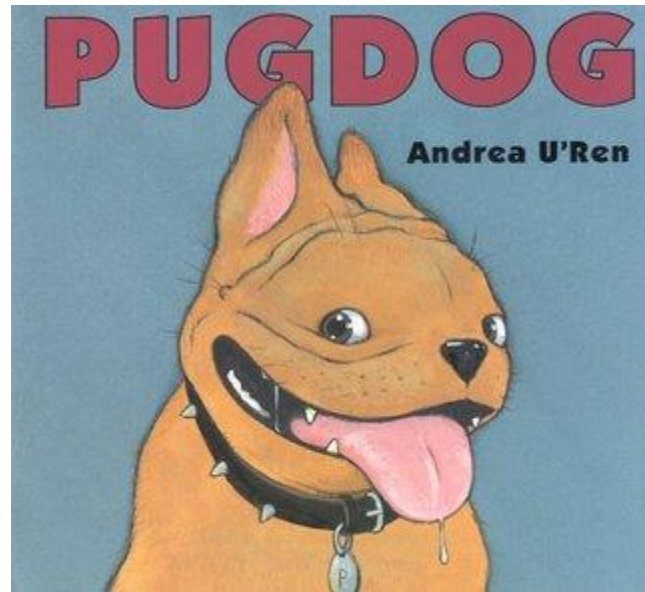
Pugdog, Andrea U'Ren

Publisher's summary: *Mike doesn't know much about dogs. But he and his pup are great friends. Every day Mike takes Pugdog for a romp in the park; every night he treats Pugdog to a belly scratch before bed.*

Then comes the news: Pugdog is not a he, as Mike had thought all along, but a she!

Mike gives Pugdog a crash course on how to look and act the way a girl dog should. But Mike is no expert and soon enough Pugdog is miserable. If she is going to recover, it seems Mike is going to have to learn a lot more about dogs—and other things as well...

Grade level suggestion: PreK-3rd.



The Boy in the Dress, David Walliams, illustrated by Quentin Blake

Publisher's summary: *Dennis lives in a boring house on a boring street in a boring town. But he's about to find out that when you open your mind, life becomes anything but boring! You'll laugh, you'll cry and Dennis will live with you forever...*

Grade level suggestion: 1st -3rd (read aloud), 3rd-8th (read independently).

Sample Lesson Plans

The following documents are sample lesson plans and lesson ideas that correlate to Ohio's English Language Arts Standards, Social Studies Standards, and the draft Social and Emotional Learning Standards of Ohio (draft as of May 2019). Four of the children's books included in the children's literature review were used to supplement these lessons and activities.

Gender Snowperson	
Subject/Domain: Social Studies & Social-emotional	Grade Level: K-3
Lesson Topic: Diverse gender identities	Lesson Duration: 30-40 minutes
<p><u>Standard(s):</u> Social and Emotional, K-2: 3. 2. a. Discuss how a person can be different or the same from other people.</p> <p>Social Studies 2nd grade, 4. Biographies can show how peoples' actions have shaped the world in which we live.</p> <p><u>Objective(s):</u> Using the biography <u>I am Jazz</u>, students will discuss how a person's gender identity and expression makes them the same or different from other people.</p> <p>Students will build empathy and understanding of people of diverse gender identities.</p>	
Materials/references	
<p><u>I Am Jazz</u> by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings</p> <p>Chart paper and markers</p> <p>Gender Snowperson hand-out (teacher copy and blank copy)</p> <p>This lesson is inspired by and adapted from the following document:</p> <p>GSAFE WI, (n.d.). <i>Gender snowperson: Understanding gender identity</i>. Welcoming Schools: A Project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Retrieved from https://assets2.hrc.org/welcoming-schools/documents/WS_Lesson_Gender_Snowperson.pdf</p>	
Differentiation/Accommodation	
<p>Discussion about diverse gender identities is supported with large visuals to aid comprehension. The teacher may want to conduct this read-aloud and discussion in small groups. Groups can be flexible, but keep in mind peer-to-peer interactions and attitudes when creating groups.</p>	
Instructional Delivery	

Introduction:

With chart paper and markers at hand, gather students in the reading area. Show students the front and back cover of the book I Am Jazz, and ask them the following questions:

- *Who do you think this is on the front cover? In the photos on the wall?*
- *Explain that this is an autobiography. An autobiography is a book about a person written by that person. Jazz wrote this book with another author to help us learn about her life.*

Begin reading the book while showing students the illustrations. As you read, ask the following questions:

- **“Here are some of my other favorite things”** *Raise your hand if Jazz mentions something that you like too!*
- **“I have a girl brain but a boy body. This is called transgender. I was born this way!”** Use Jazz’s drawings to help clarify this concept. Ask students, *How does Jazz feel in the drawing where she looks like a boy? Compare this to the drawings of Jazz as a girl.*
- **“...I had to put on my boy clothes again. This made me mad!”** *Why was Jazz mad about her clothes?*
- **“...felt like telling a lie.”** *Do you ever feel guilty when you know you’ve lied about something? Especially something important? [discuss] That is how Jazz feels when she pretended to be a boy.*
- **“Even today, there are kids who tease me, or call me by a boy name, or ignore me altogether. This makes me feel crummy.”** *Why did those kids tease Jazz? (she is different than them. Discuss how she is different).*
- **“Then I remember that the kids who get to know me usually want to be my friend.”** *Can you be friends with someone that is different than you? What are some ways?*

After reading, set the book aside. Read the sentence **“I think what matters most is what a person is like inside,”** again to the class. *Raise your hand if you agree.*

Explain that this book is an autobiography, *“Jazz tells her story so that people just like her are accepted and believed. Her book is used in schools around the world to change the world.”*

Body:

1. Write the word “Gender” on the chart paper. (Leave some room, because in the next step you will be adding the word “Snowperson” after the word “Gender.”)

- Ask students to turn to their neighbor and talk about what that word might mean. Have students share out their responses. Usually, students will say that gender is if you are a boy or a girl.
- Let students know that gender is your internal sense of being a girl, boy, both or neither. There are many ways that people identify their gender and there are many genders.
- Also, let students know that there are many, many ways to be a girl, boy, both or neither and that you all will be discussing this as you do this activity.

2. At the top of the chart paper, add the word “Snowperson” after “Gender” so that the heading reads “Gender Snowperson.” (You will want to use the Gender Snowperson teacher handout to

guide you—you will be recreating this visual for your students on the chart paper.) **Draw three same-size circles vertically down the paper. Draw eyes and a nose in the top circle.**

- If students start to mention that this is a “snowman”, let them know that you wrote “snowperson” because *“We don’t know if the Snowperson is a girl, boy, both or neither until we ask.”*

3. Next to the bottom circle of the Snowperson, write and explain to your students that the bottom circle is a person’s sex assigned at birth. You could also use the term “girl/boy assigned at birth”.

- A simple way to explain this to students is that when a baby is born, a doctor or midwife looks at their body/anatomy and says they are a girl or a boy. Babies can’t talk yet, so they can’t tell us how they feel about their gender. When they start to communicate, they may say they feel like a girl or a boy, both or neither.

4. In the middle circle of the Gender Snowperson, draw a heart. Next to it, write and explain to the class that this part of the snowperson represents who you love. Write “families, love, and respect,” etc. in this circle.

5. In the top circle of the Gender Snowperson, draw a brain above the eyes and nose. Next to it, write and explain to your students that this part of the Gender Snowperson represents how you feel or your “gender identity”: **girl, boy, both or neither**. All of us have a gender identity. Our gender identity is our understanding in our mind and heart of who we are.

6. Write the word “Gender Expression” under the Snowperson and draw some clothing and hair on your Gender Snowperson. Use a variety of clothing options, such as a bowtie, hair, mustache, a skirt or pants and shoes. Depending on your class/group size, you may want to invite students up one at a time to add an article of clothing or hair on the Snowperson.

7. Discuss the terms “transgender” and “cisgender” using the anchor chart.

- *In the book, Jazz says she is transgender. Who remembers what that term means? If necessary, turn to page 8 and read it to the class.*
- *If transgender means that Jazz has a girl brain but a boy body, what if someone had a boy brain but a girl body?*
- *If someone’s brain matches their body, meaning their gender identity (point to top circle) matches how they were born (point to bottom circle), they are called “cisgendered.”*
- **It is important that students learn and practice using these vocabulary terms—**discourage the use of “normal” when referring to cisgender individuals. This alienates people of differing gender identities and does not promote inclusivity.

Evaluation & Extension

Closing:

Give each student a copy of the Gender Snowperson student handout. Have them fill in the worksheet with their own gender identities, love, sex, and expression. This is optional! Please keep in mind that revealing this information to the class and you, as the teacher, can be very difficult for students who are questioning their gender identity. This kind of reveal, often known as “coming

out,” is on students’ own terms and for their own reasons. If students are not open about their identity, they may fill out the worksheet using the anchor chart as a reference.

Home-School Connection:

Send a copy of the Gender Snowperson hand-out home for families. They may choose to use this as a reference to continue the conversation at home.



Welcoming Schools

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GENDER SNOWPERSON – TEACHER VERSION



- How You Feel
- Gender Identity
- Girl, Boy, Both or Neither

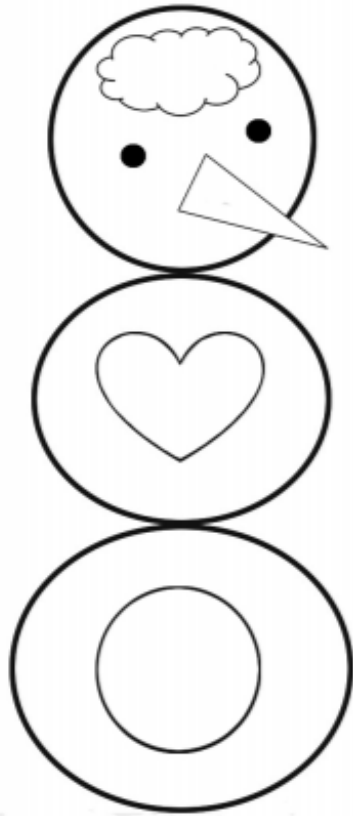
- Who You Love

- Girl / Boy Assigned at Birth

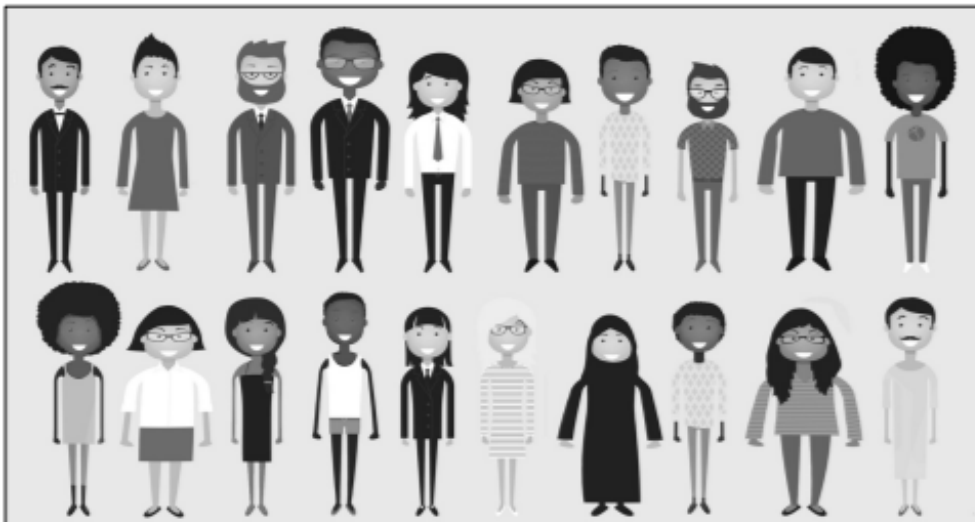
GENDER EXPRESSION: How we present our gender to the world through clothing, hair and mannerisms. In our school, children can express themselves fully—to be who they are without being teased or bullied about their appearances.



GENDER SNOWPERSON



GENDER EXPRESSION: How we present our gender to the world through clothing, hair and mannerisms. In our school, children can express themselves fully—to be who they are without being teased or bullied about their appearances.



Morris Micklewhite	
<u>Subject/Domain:</u> Approaches to learning, creativity	<u>Grade Level:</u> Preschool
<u>Lesson Topic:</u> Expression of Ideas and Feelings Through the Arts	<u>Lesson Duration:</u> 15-20 minutes
<u>Standard(s):</u> A 13. Express individuality, life experiences, and what they know and are able to do through a variety of media.	
<u>Objective(s):</u> Students will be able to express their individual identities (gender expression, physical traits, likes/dislikes) through painting and drawing.	
Materials/references	
<u>Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress</u> by Christine Baldacchino, illustrated by Isabelle Malenfant Water color paints & brushes Cardstock/paper Easel, mirror, pencil grips (optional) Note to Families (one for each student to take home)	
Differentiation/Accommodation	
Students are asked to paint themselves in this lesson to express personal identity. A mirror can be provided so students are able to see themselves—this will enhance their self-portraits. Pencil grips, easels, and/or stools can be used to assist students with fine- or gross-motor needs with the painting activity. Hand-over-hand support may also be useful when assisting students with the painting task.	
Instructional Delivery	
<u>Introduction:</u> Gather students at the reading area and show them the front cover of the book. Before reading the title, draw students' attention to the child on the cover. Ask, " <i>Are they a boy or a girl?</i> " Follow up by asking, " <i>How do you know?</i> " Students' answers may mention the child's hair, clothes, or facial expression.	

Read the title and the author. Tell students that the child on the front cover is Morris Micklewhite.

Set a Purpose for listening:

“Morris is a boy, and we know from the title of the book and the front cover that Morris is wearing a dress. As we read, think about this question: can boys wear dresses?” Do not discuss answers until the END of the story.

Body:

Read the story aloud while showing students the illustrations. Pause on the following pages to ask questions to guide discussion.

“He takes turns wearing all the different shoes, but his most favorite ones go click, click, click across the floor.” *Do you have a favorite outfit? How does it make you feel?*

“Astronauts don’t wear dresses?” *Why are the other boys being mean?* Guide students to the following answer: They are being mean because Morris is different than them.

“We don’t want you to turn us into girls.” *Is that possible? Boys, can you turn the girls into boys? Girls, can you turn the boys into girls?* NO!

“...after a wonderful dream about being on a space safari with Moo.” Turn the book towards yourself (so students can’t see the pictures) and have students close their eyes. Read this page aloud slowly with a lot of expression. Have students visualize what is happening in Morris’ dream as you read. Tell them to “paint a picture” in their brains to understand what is happening in this part of the story. When you’re done reading, have students open their eyes and show them the picture.

“‘That’s me,’ he said.” (Morris’ self-portrait). Compare Morris’ painting with Malefant’s illustrations. *How do you know this is Morris?*

“When snack time is over, Becky demanded the dress.” *Morris does a good job sharing the dress. Why does Becky want the dress?*

After reading, return to the guiding question: *Can boys wear dresses?* Guide students to the conclusion that, yes, boys can wear dresses. People can wear whatever makes them happy. Ask students, *Is it okay to look/be different than your friends?* In order to encourage inclusivity and acceptance, the answer should be yes—no one should be afraid to be who they are.

Evaluation & Extension

Closing:

In small groups, as teacher-led a center, or at an art station, have students spend time painting. Use the illustrations from the book and Morris’ self-portrait as a model. Use the following prompts to guide students’ creations:

Paint yourself—wear and be anything you want. Make sure we know which part of your painting is you. What is your gender? What do you like and dislike? Show us in your painting. (see differentiation/accommodations section for ideas on how to support diverse learners in this activity).

Home-School Connection:

Once paintings are dry, ask students to describe their painting and give it a title. Have a teacher/adult write their description and title at the top or bottom of the painting.

Send the paintings home with the reproducible Note to Families. This note will help guide discussion at home and help families answer questions that students may have about gender expression or self-identity.

Dear Families,

Today we read the story Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress by Christine Baldacchino. The theme of this story is gender expression and friendship. We are using this story to start a conversation about similarities and differences and to encourage appropriate social skills.

Accepting people that are different is an important social skill for children to learn. They are going to encounter all kinds of people with different abilities, races, family dynamics, and gender identities throughout their lifetime. While reading, we discussed gender expression and how to make friends with people who are different than you. I am sending this note home to encourage you to continue this discussion with your child at home.

Should your child have a question about gender or anything we read about in class, PLEASE feel free to contact me. I am willing to help facilitate this discussion if you wish.

Sincerely,

A Class of Crayons	
Subject/Domain: ELA & Social-emotional	Grade Level: K-1
Lesson Topic: Speaking and Listening, Self-Awareness	Lesson Duration: 30-40 minutes
<p><u>Standard(s):</u> CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1 & SL.K.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten/grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.</p> <p>A. 2. 1. a. Identify personal interests and qualities</p> <p><u>Objective(s):</u> Students will participate in a collaborative discussion about how we shouldn't judge people based on their appearance using the book <u>Red: A Crayon's Story</u> by Michael Hall.</p> <p>Students will explore their internal identities and identify personal interests and/or qualities.</p>	
Materials/references	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Red: A Crayon's Story</u> by Michael Hall • Crayons of many different colors • Crayon template and wrapper printed on cardstock/paper of many different colors • Scissors, glue, writing utensils <p>This lesson is inspired by and adapted from the following document:</p> <p>Olson, K. (n.d.), <i>Red: A Crayon's Story — There's more to me than you can see</i>. Welcoming Schools: A Project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Retrieved from https://assets2.hrc.org/welcoming-schools/documents/WS_Lesson_Red_A_Crayons_Story.pdf</p>	
Differentiation/Accommodation	
<p>Pencil grips, easels, and/or stools can be used to assist students with fine- or gross-motor needs with the crayon project. Hand-over-hand support may also be useful when assisting students with scissoring or gluing tasks. Differentiated writing prompts are provided for the crayon project as well.</p>	
Instructional Delivery	

Introduction:

Gather the class at the carpet/reading area. Sit on the floor in front of the group and pull out a crayon. Ask students the following questions:

- *What color is this crayon? How do you know?*
- *What could I draw with this crayon (based on the color)? Could I draw anything else?*

Give the example of drawing something that is not the color of the crayon. For example, if you have a green crayon, ask, “*Should I draw an orange with this crayon? Blueberry?*”

Continue with different colors a couple different times.

Show students the front cover of the book Red: A Crayon’s Story by Michael Hall. Ask them to *look closely at the crayon on the front cover. Why are the crayons at the bottom saying “What?” and “Uh-oh.”?* The class should notice that Red is making blue marks on the page.

Set a purpose for listening:

This is a story about someone who is pretending to be something that they are not. As I read, try to find out why this happens.

Body:

Read the story aloud while showing students the illustrations. Pause on the following pages to ask questions to guide discussion.

“He was red. But he wasn’t very good at it.” Why wasn’t he very good? What does that mean?

“His mother thought he needed to mix with the other colors.” *What do you think is going to happen when Red and Yellow try to draw together? Make a prediction.*

“His grandparents thought he wasn’t warm enough.” *What colors are his grandparents? Why did the author choose these colors?*

“Everyone seemed to have something to say.” Read the statements from the other crayons. *Are they being good friends right now? If Red heard them say these things, how would he feel?*

“He just couldn’t get the hang of it.” *What are the art supplies trying to do on these pages? (they are trying to help). Why didn’t their work help Red? (They just don’t know what to do).*

“Will you try?” *Turn to a partner and make a prediction: will Red be able to make a blue ocean?*

“I’m blue!” *Why are these drawings so easy for Red to make? (He has been blue all along!)*

Closing:

Ask your students if they can think of examples or share an identity or a part of themselves that others may not know about just by looking at them.

What are some things about yourself that others may not know by just looking at you? What about other people?

You may need to provide examples. Some examples include:

- Religions—*someone might not know that I am Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, etc. by just looking at me.*
- Family dynamics—*someone might not know that I have two dads/moms, my mom has different skin/hair than I do, that I am adopted, etc. just by looking at me.*
- Likes and dislikes—*someone might not know that I love to sing, dance, build, draw, my favorite color, etc. just by looking at me.*
- Gender identity*—*someone might not know that I am a girl/boy/nonbinary just by looking at me. I am transgender/nonbinary.*
- Abilities—*someone might not know that I love sports because I have a physical disability, but I love Basketball, Soccer, etc.*

*Be sure to hit this one! See the **Gender Snowperson lesson** (which uses the book *I Am Jazz*) to facilitate a more in-depth discussion of gender identity. Students may be able to make text-to-text connections if these lessons are done in conjunction with one another.

Evaluation & Extension

Crayon Project:

1. Pick a crayon template that best suits your students' needs.

One has prompts written in each box: I like..., I don't like..., I feel...

The other has blank boxes so that you can determine the prompts or to allow for more open-ended responses by students.

2. Print one crayon for each student.

Print crayons on various colors of cardstock/construction paper and have students pick the crayon color that they want.

3. Print one crayon wrapper for each student.

Print the crayon wrapper on various colors of cardstock/construction paper and have students pick the color they want.

Note: Printing paper is easier to fold than construction paper or cardstock.

4. Ask your students to answer the prompts on the crayon.

For the template with blank boxes, you could ask your students to share an identity or a part of themselves that others may not know about just by looking at them.

5. Assemble the crayon and the wrapper.

- Cut around the crayon.
- For the wrapper, cut on the solid line on the outside of the crayon wrapper.
- Cut the wrapper in half on the dashed line in the middle of the word "crayon."
- Fold on the dotted lines on both sides.
- Wrap the wrapper around the crayon, one part on each side.
- Tape or glue the back tabs of the wrapper to the crayon. The front flaps will then be

- able to open and close.

Home-School Connection:

Once the crayon projects are dried, teachers may choose to display them in the halls or in the classroom. Projects can be sent home to facilitate further conversation about identities and being who you are.

**THERE'S
MORE TO ME
THAN YOU CAN SEE**

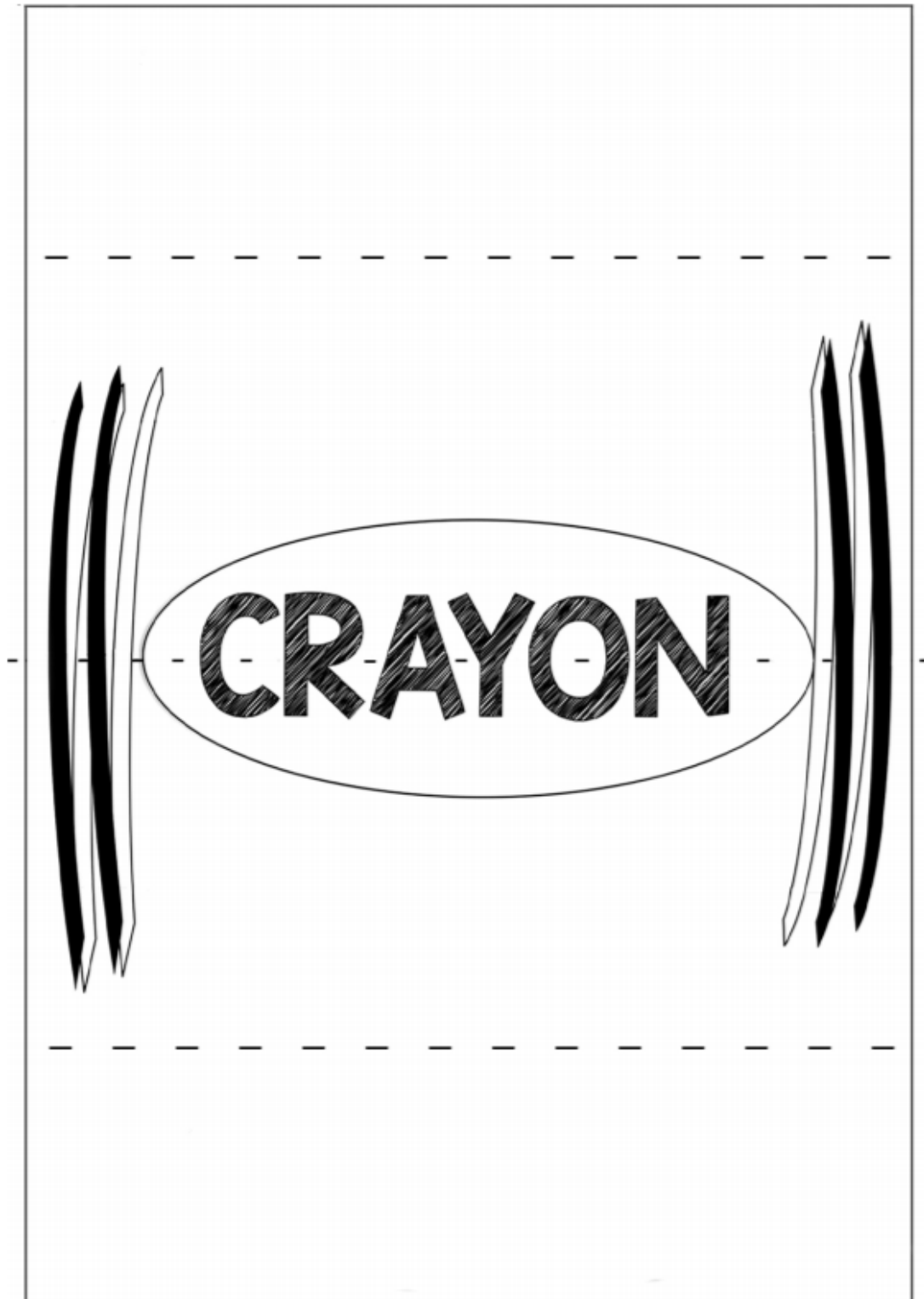
I like....

I don't like....

I feel....



**THERE'S
MORE TO ME
THAN YOU CAN SEE**



Introducing Teddy	
Subject/Domain: Social and Emotional Development	Grade Level: K-2
Lesson Topic: Gender identity & Friendship	Lesson Duration: 20-30 minutes
<p>Standard(s): Social and Emotional K-2 C. 1. 2. a. Identify words and actions that may support or hurt the feelings of others</p> <p>Objective(s): Through discussion during the read-aloud, students will identify words and actions that support the feelings of characters in the story.</p>	
Materials/references	
<p><u>Introducing Teddy: A Gentle Story about Gender and Friendship</u> by Jessica Walton, Illustrated by Dougal MacPherson</p> <p>Front cover handout</p> <p>Walton, J. (n.d.) Teachers Guide <i>Introducing Teddy</i>. Retrieved from https://media.bloomsbury.com/rep/files/Introducing%20Teddy%20Teachers%20Guide.FINAL.pdf</p>	
Differentiation/Accommodation	
<p>Students may write or draw to complete the front cover handout. Pencil grips and hand-over-hand support may be used to assist in fine motor tasks.</p>	
Instructional Delivery	
<p><u>Introduction:</u></p> <p>Gather students in the reading area. Show students the front and back cover of the book <u>Introducing Teddy</u>, and ask them the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Who do you think this is on the front cover? Is it the same person that is in the mirror reflection?</i> <p>Set a purpose for listening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>As I read, I want you to think about how the main character expresses their gender identity.</i> <p>Begin reading the book while showing students the illustrations. As you read, ask the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “If I tell you...you might not be my friend anymore.” <i>Why is the teddy scared to tell Thomas what’s wrong? Turn to a partner and talk about it.</i> - “I wish my name was Tilly, not Thomas.” <i>How do you think Errol will react to this news?</i> 	

- **“I’ve always wanted a bow instead.”** *Why does Tilly move the bow?*

Body:

After reading, ask the following questions:

- *How does Errol react when Tilly tells him that she is a girl teddy? What does he say? Is Errol being a good friend to Tilly the Teddy?*
- *How does Ava react when Errol tells her that Tilly has a new name? What does she say? Is Ava being a good friend to Tilly the Teddy?*
- *What four activities do Errol and Teddy always do together before Tilly tells Errol she is a girl?*
- *What four activities do Errol and Teddy always do together after Tilly tells Errol she is a girl?*
- *Is there something important about Errol and Tilly doing the same activities together at the beginning and end of the story?*
- *What do you think the author is trying to tell us? What is the moral of this story?*

As students generate answers, write them on a piece of chart paper. Display these answers in the classroom to facilitate discussion about friendship throughout the year.

Evaluation & Extension

Closing:

Use the think, pair, share discussion strategy; have students answer the question, “*What does it mean to be yourself?*”

1. Display the front cover of *Introducing Teddy*. Pass out the blank front cover handouts.
2. Students will draw a self-portrait to show who they truly are. Older students may add writing to their cover as well. There is a space by the title for them to write their name.
3. Collect each student’s front covers and bind pages into a class picture book to be used in later conversations about personal identity.

B L O O M S B U R Y

INTRODUCING

A story about being yourself

Illustrated by

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